The Builder.

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FOR some time past, the whole weight of the business at the office of Metropolitan Buildings has rested on Mr. Hosking and the registrar (Mr. Symonds), in consequence of the retirement of Mr. Higgins. It was considered desirable, in making a fresh appointment, to stipulate that the new referee should undertake no other business; and this, it seems, has caused some delay. One architect of high standing, who was a candidate for the appointment, refused it when offered to him with the condition named, and the vacancy has only just now been filled up. Without any disrespect to the gentleman who succeeds him, we must express our regret that Mr. Higgins should have felt it necessary, so soon after the establishment of the office, to withdraw himself from it. Doubtless he found the post not an easy one; and we can well understand that, possessing a sufficient fortune (which all who know Mr. Higgins will say he has worthily obtained and richly deserves), he might feel disinclined to continue to perform its duties. For the sake of the public, however, we would have had him remain until the Act had been amended by the legislature, which will probably be done next session. As it is, we must simply offer him our best wishes for health to enjoy his ease, and express a hope that Mr. Hosking may find in his successor as excellent a colleague.

The mode of proceeding in the office has now taken a settled shape; and although there are points wherein alteration is desirable, must, in the whole, be considered as satisfactory as could be anticipated. The referees have shewn on several occasions that their chief office is to protect the public, and the two or three district surveyors who don't know how to behave themselves,—fortunately a very small minority,—have been properly punished in several cases, and so checked. The expense of application, too great at any time, is often increased by the want of precision and care on the part of the applicants themselves. We recommend such of our readers as have occasion to appeal to the referees to state their case clearly, and without verbiage, and to avoid unnecessary meetings and postponements, by which means the costs will be much lessened; but we nevertheless urge upon the referees the importance of an early revision of their scale of fees.

We have before us a number of awards and certificates recently issued by the referees, and proceed to lay the heads of some of them before our readers.

Timber in external Wall of House commenced before January last.—Mr. Martyr, district surveyor of Deptford, gave notice of irregularity to the owner of a house in St. Nicholas-street, Deptford, on the ground that when he surveyed it in January 1845, the front external wall was supported on a breastsummer and story posts, and that since then the owner had determined to make it into a private dwelling-house, and had filled in between the timber with brickwork, intending to compo the whole surface. The owner had, further, given no notice, considering that the district surveyor had no jurisdiction in the matter; but joined him in the application to the referees, in order that the question might be decided. The award was,—"That inasmuch as the house in question was commenced before the 1st day of January, 1845, and inasmuch as the works in question do not constitute an enlargement or alteration of the said building so commenced, and remaining unfinished at the time such works were executed, the said works are not liable to the provisions, rules, and directions of the said Act." The expenses to be paid by the district surveyor.

Approach to Stone Staircase in old House.—The builder of a stone staircase in a second-rate house in South street, Park-lane (while in progress), contended that, as the house was an old one, he was not required to make the joists to carry the landings, and the other internal connections, fire-proof. The district surveyor, Mr. Foxhall, thought otherwise, and, mutually, they sent the case to the referees. The award was,—"That the stairs in question being of stone, the passage from the entrance-door to the side of the staircase furthest from the door must have its floor fire-proof, and wholly upborne and supported by fire-proof constructions, and also that the landings on the third or one-pair, and on the fourth or two-pair floors, connecting the flights of stairs between the several stories, must be also made fire-proof, and be wholly upborne and supported by fire-proof constructions." The expenses of the office, and one guinea to the district surveyor, to be paid by the builder.

Underpinning Walls adjoining a new Erection.—Mr. Winsland, the builder of a church to be erected in Upper Charlotte-street, Bloomsbury, having excavated the ground immediately contiguous to certain dwelling-houses and workshops, to a greater depth than the flank walls of the said houses and premises, underpinned the said walls along their entire length, but not to the full thickness of the said walls, nor to the full depth of the excavations adjoining them. On the information of Mr. Baker, the district surveyor, the referees went into the case, and determined that the underpinning was to be amended and altered in a substantial and workmanlike manner, throughout the full thickness of the walls in question, and to the full depth of the excavations referred to (or to such less depth as in the opinion of the district surveyor will meet the circumstances of the case), and conformably in every other respect to the rules relative to underpinning in sec. 28 of the Buildings Act. The expenses of the office, and a fee to district surveyor, to be paid by the builder.

Recesses in Party-walls.—Mr. Harding, of Deptford, being about to build a fourth-rate house in Rotherhithe, of which two side or external walls would probably be used at a future day as party-walls, asked the special sanction of the referees, to form four recesses in the basement story of these walls about two-thirds their extent, leaving nine inches at the back of the same.

The referees certified, that as the said recesses were proposed to be made in a party-wall, and in the first or basement story, and so that the back thereof would be nearer than seven inches from the centre of the wall, the same were contrary to the rules of the Act in schedule D, part 3, under the head "Recesses and Chases," and that they, the said referees, had no power to consent to or authorize the same.

Overhanging Roofs.—The builder of a detached house in Gloucester Road, Paddington (not sufficiently detached to render it "insulated" within the meaning of the Act), sought the permission of the referees to construct the eaves and cornice of timber, as was commonly done before the passing of the Act. The application was grounded on schedule E, describing projections from face-walls to be of such (proper and sufficient) materials as the official referees may approve and permit.

After considering the application, the referees certified, that inasmuch as the proposed eaves and cornice were not formed of, or efficiently protected by, proper and sufficient fire-proof materials, they could not permit them to be so constructed.

It may be well to remark, that the awards are necessarily influenced, at times, by circumstances which would not appear in short abstracts of the cases; we would suggest, therefore, that parties who find in any case reported in our pages a resemblance to their own, and would be guided by the award, should consult the whole of the documents connected with it; which may be done at the Metropolitan Buildings Office on payment of six-pence.

ARCHITECTURE—THE EXPONENT OF NATIONAL CHARACTER.

To few individuals does the term "architecture" convey any impression of its comprehensiveness, of the multitude, and apparently opposite nature, of its details. In its full extent, it includes the matter of every art, which ministers to the comfort, or to the delight of man, and in its service may be enlisted every variety of imaginative effort, and every form of mechanical skill. Dating its history from the age of the creation, it was the originator of all the arts, and throughout its after progress, the state of all has never been so felicitous, as when the connection, each with the rest, was intimate and mutually influential. All the forms in which the arts of design are expressed, with the operative skill ministering to, or associated with them, were once *one* art, and generally the pursuit of *one* individual. Every variety of building, every object of decorative art, every machine; works of construction, whether built upon the surface, excavated in the earth, or projected into the ocean; in fine, every work, almost, in which the caprices of fancy, or the demonstrations of science can be wrought into form, was once the offspring of one mind, and that mind the possession of the architect. If, in its more circumscribed aspect, architecture is the index to the modes of life, the condition and political state, and the scientific skill of different peoples, in its more comprehensive meaning, it is the embodiment of their thoughts and opinions, of their exact intellectual condition. It is the figure, in which the history of imperial sway is mirrored, for the perception of those, who are not blind to its instructive teachings. It is the voice of centuries past, speaking from the mist of unrecorded time, and the lamp, which illuminates the learning of one age to the contemplation of another.

Though the world has witnessed the prevalence of many modes in architecture, they are each highly expressive of the thoughts, and habits of their originators, and in some styles, the expression of those characteristics is so complete and evident, that we have considered, that some illustration of them would not be uninteresting. Merely referring to Egyptian architecture, as illustrative of the mysterious rule of a dominant hierarchy,* who succeeded in enslaving the thoughts of men, through the influence on the senses of a mystic ceremonial, in which the art played an important part; we pass to the style of the Roman empire. The architecture of Greece had borne the stamp of that refinement, which was the peculiar property of the Grecian nation; it was characterized by a noble simplicity of form, to which ornament was always held as secondary. Mouldings, whether ornamented or plain, were few in number, but arranged and proportioned with elaborate skill. Optical illusions were overcome by minute alterations, in the form and proportion, intentionally de-

* At p. 181, *ante*, are some remarks on this subject by the writer.

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